

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A computerized method of representing at least one characteristic of a design element on a visual design surface, the method comprising:

(a) using shapes to visually represent design elements with a shape on a visual design surface, wherein the design elements are entities of a process or system being designed by a user, and the design elements include a first design element and a second design element;

(b) defining characteristics for the design elements such that each of the design elements is associated with one of the characteristics, wherein the characteristic associated with the first design element is different than the characteristic associated with the second design element; determining a value of a characteristic of the element;

(c) associating the characteristics with an aura, respectively, each of the auras being a visually perceptible element on the visual design surface that is distinguishable from the other auras, wherein different ones of the characteristics are associated with different auras; indicative of the determined value; and

(d) displaying the aura in association with the shape for each design element on the visual design surface with the aura associated with the characteristic associated with that design element, wherein the shapes of the first and second design elements are displayed with different auras; and

(e) automatically moving the shapes of design elements sharing a particular one of the characteristics into an affinity region for the particular characteristic, such that the moved shapes are located in proximity to each other on the visual design surface.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the aura comprises a color coded area surrounding the shape.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the aura comprises a color coded area adjacent to at least a portion of the shape.

4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, further including:

(e) ~~repeating (a)–(d) for a plurality of elements; and~~

(f) merging the auras associated with at least some the shapes of design elements in close proximity and having the same value of the affinity region for the particular characteristic.

5-6. (Canceled)

7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, 6, further including providing a label for at least one affinity region that allows a user to change the label in order to change the design value of the characteristic of all of the elements contained in the at least one affinity region from design elements associated with the particular characteristic to design elements associated with another characteristic. by changing the label.

8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the characteristics defined in (b) include ~~comprises~~ a use for the design element.

9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the characteristics defined in (b) include ~~comprises~~ an identification of a namespace.

10. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the characteristics defined in (b) include ~~comprises~~ an identification of an application layer.

11. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the characteristics defined in (b) include ~~comprises~~ an identification of an importance level.

12. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, ~~further wherein (d) further includes:~~
including:

(e) — ~~associating a particular design element with first and determining a value of a second characteristics; and of the element;~~

(f) — ~~displaying the shape for the particular design element on the visual design surface with the associating the second characteristic with a second auras associated with the first and indicative of the value of the second characteristics, respectively.; and~~

(g) — ~~displaying the second aura in association with the shape on the design surface.~~

13. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 12, wherein (d) further includes:
including:

(h) — ~~associating the particular design element with determining a value of a third characteristic; and of the element;~~

(i) — ~~determining the shape for the particular design element on the visual design surface with the aura associated with associating the third characteristic, with a third aura; and~~

(j) — ~~displaying the third aura in association with the shape on the design surface.~~

14-18 (Canceled)

19. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable medium containing computer-executable instructions for performing the steps comprising:

(a) displaying on a visual design surface multiple shapes corresponding to design elements, respectively, the multiple design elements including first and second design elements;
shapes; and

(b) defining characteristics for the design elements such that each of the design elements is associated with one of the characteristics, the characteristic associated with the first design element being different from the characteristic associated with the second design element;

(c) defining auras for the characteristics, respectively, such that different characteristics have different auras, each of the auras being a visually perceptible element on the visual display surface that is distinguishable from the other auras;

(d) displaying on the visual design surface an aura in proximity to each of the design element shapes in proximity with the aura generated for the characteristic associated with the design element; and

(e) automatically moving the shapes of design elements sharing a particular one of the characteristics into an affinity region for the particular characteristic, such that the moved shapes are located in proximity to each other on the visual design surface, the auras being displayed with different visual characteristics in order to

wherein (d) visually indicates that the first and second design elements shapes have different characteristics, and values corresponding to a particular characteristic

wherein the design elements are entities of a process or system being designed by a user.

20. (Currently Amended) The computer-readable medium of claim 19, wherein ~~(b)~~ (d) comprises displaying the aura around the design element shape.

21. (Canceled)

22. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein each of the characteristics defined in (b) comprises one of the following: a particular namespace for the corresponding design element, a particular importance level for the corresponding design element, a particular security requirement for the corresponding design element, and a particular intended use within the process or system for the corresponding design element.